

CIE 100 *Stacks on Stacks* Common Event

In the classroom-Introduce the [Sorted Books Project by Nina Katchadourian](#)

The statement below describes the project.

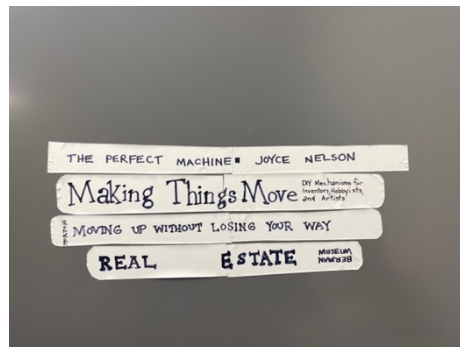
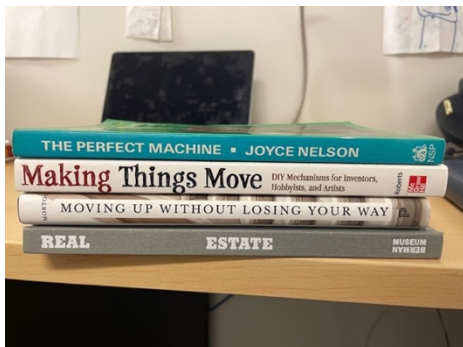
Click on the link above to view a few of the examples in class.

The *Sorted Books* project began in 1993, and it has taken place on many different sites over the years, ranging from private homes to specialized book collections. The process is the same in every case: I sort through a collection of books, pull particular titles, and eventually group the books into clusters so that the titles can be read in sequence. The final results are shown either as photographs of the book clusters or as the actual stacks themselves, often shown on the shelves of the library they came from. Taken as a whole, the clusters are a cross-section of that library's holdings that reflect that particular library's focus, idiosyncrasies, and inconsistencies. They sometimes also function as a portrait of the particular book owner. The *Sorted Books* project is an ongoing project which I add to almost each year, and there are hundreds of images in the ongoing archive to date.

Before you head over to the library together, group your students into pairs. Give each pair a section of the library from the list provided to you. They should copy down this section onto the “Step by Step Instructions for students” document and take it with them.

In Myrin Library-Students will make a “stack” to be adhered to the end of their section of shelving by drawing the book titles they choose onto individual stickers which they will place directly on the endcap of the shelf.

The long shelves in a library are called “stacks”. Once in the library, students will scan the titles in their section of the stacks and pull books from the shelf that relate to each other in a poetic or narrative way. Students should think of this as a form of play. In his book *Play Matters* Miguel Sicart writes “To play is to be in the world. Playing is a form of understanding what surrounds us and who we are, and a way of engaging with others. Play is a mode of being human.” There is no right or wrong answer to this assignment. The goal of the team should be to come up with as many combinations and sequences as they can in the time allowed, choose the best one, then create a representative drawing of it for the installation. You can use the post-activity questions as an in-class discussion/introduction to the Katie Merz section or as a canvas assignment.



Step by Step instructions for students

You have been assigned to section _____

1. Find your assigned section in the library.
2. Look over the books in your assigned section to see if any titles stand out
3. Pull books from the shelves that poetically or narratively relate to each other and create a sequence by stacking the books in an order.
4. Take a picture of your stack for reference.
5. Using markers and pens, draw representations of the book titles onto the sections of sticky paper.
 - Pay attention to the font, spacing, and letter forms!
 - Choose the appropriate writing or drawing implement for the job.
 - Don't forget the author! (if they are listed on the spine of the book)
6. Peel off the back of the paper and place each sticker onto the endcap of the library section you were assigned.
7. Please place any books you've taken off of the shelves on the red shelves or carts you'll find at various places in the library. DO NOT RE-SHELVE!

Post-activity questions:

1. Describe what your "stack" or sequence is about.
2. Describe the thought process and conversation between you and you partner to get to the final sequence.
3. For a viewer, how is the drawing different than the actual stack of books?
 - a. What is lost in this translation?
 - b. What is gained in this translation?
4. What are other ways in your everyday life that you approach your world in a playful way?
5. Do you regularly associate "play" with the library?
6. Is play serious work? Why or why not?
7. Take a walk through the library again some time after this project to experience it as a viewer. What are your impressions of the project as a whole?

Katie Merz's *Live the Questions* is meant to be a representation and commemoration of the class of 2020 and their experiences. The artist translates specific ideas and objects into a large-scale drawing using a stylized approach. Compare and contrast *Live the Questions* and *Stacks on Stacks*. What are the similarities and differences between the two projects? In your interpretation, what meaning is made and what themes are explored in *Stacks on Stacks*? Can you take this same approach of interpreting and apply it to *Live the Questions*? Both projects take contributions by many individuals to create a large unified visual experience. What is the value of this way of working?